



# INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

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*Strategic Connections resulting in Unique Solutions*

## Chair's Corner



November seems to be the point at which the end of the year comes rather quickly! It is also the beginning of many federal holidays; I want

to wish everyone an enjoyable and safe season!

Our 2018 **Leadership FEB program** participants will be completing this year's class with visits to the Social Security Administration Office and the Environmental Protection Agency this month. We appreciate Julius Keys and the effort he puts into the details for each of our class forums for 2018!



And, YES, we are already beginning the planning phase for our **2019 Leadership FEB class** schedule. You will see some changes in this program; as it matures with a great reputation, we hope to continue making it even better! If you would like to host one of our forums during 2019, please contact LeAnn at [leann.jenkins@gsa.gov](mailto:leann.jenkins@gsa.gov). We ask our hosts to have the agency leader welcome the group with a "management briefing" that includes how your agency fits

within the Department, a bit of history if your agency/mission has gone through changes, what your mission/focus is today, challenges, and a little on your own personal leadership journey (i.e. what (or who) made a profound impact on you in your development).

Also, expect a phone call from one of our volunteers who will be **updating our Directory** information. This database will be receiving some much needed attention! We appreciate your assistance in providing the necessary information to populate our database with the most up-to-date leader info, contact info, and office address.

New to our lineup of offerings will be an **Interagency Mentoring program**. 2019 will be the first year we are coordinating this program on a trial basis, determined by the level of interest. Agency Executives must volunteer to be Mentors in order to nominate an agency employee as a Mentee. We are testing a short term trial for a small group to learn and improve. Watch for more on this program in the coming year.

*Natalie*  
Natalie Saiz, Chair

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## 4 WAYS TO BE A HAPPY LEADER

“You don’t become happy by pursuing happiness. You become happy by living a life that means something.” Harold S. Kushner

Happiness is a by-product.

### ***Happy Leadership:***

#### **#1. Elevate relationship-building.**

Place relationship-building on par with delivering results.

If you want to increase your widget production by 3%:

1. Develop competencies.
2. Improve processes.
3. Confront inconsistencies.
4. Practice accountability.
5. Invite feedback.

AND ... strengthen relationships.

1. Act respectfully.
2. Practice candor with kindness.
3. Show interest in people.
4. Get dirty in the trench.
5. Intentionally think about the qualities you admire in others. (Smile)

The neglect of relationship-building ultimately hinders productivity. Read, *The Speed of Trust*, by Stephen Covey. (Yes, there’s more to delivering results than sitting around getting to know each other.)

It’s not results OR relationships. It’s results THROUGH relationships.

#### **#2. Elevate gratitude.**

Write down three new things you’re grateful for everyday for three weeks. (See [Shawn Achor](#))

#### **#3. Elevate the value of others.**

If you want to live a meaningful life today make others more important than yourself.

During team meetings and individual conversations,

whisper this mantra to yourself, “You are more important than me.”

Servant leadership is serving others. It’s difficult to be a servant when you view yourself as better than others.

Making others more important than yourself doesn’t mean you should sacrifice the best interest of your team or organization. Just the opposite.

Sometimes the best way to serve another is to manage them out.

#### **#4. Elevate team success over personal success.**

One practical way to live for something bigger than yourself is by putting the best interests of your team ahead of personal interests. (If you can’t do this, find a team where you can.)

The only way servant leaders succeed is by helping others succeed.

Leaders succeed when their team succeeds.

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2018/09/17/4-ways-to-be-a-happy-leader/>



## Spotlighting Information in Public Service

### Did you Know?

As severe weather brewed in the Texas panhandle late in the afternoon of May 16, NOAA National Weather Service forecasters alerted residents in parts of western Oklahoma about the potential for large hail and damaging tornadoes that evening, particularly in the area around Elk City.



Ninety minutes later, a dangerous, rain-wrapped [EF-2](#) tornado struck the small town: It killed one, injured eight, and destroyed about 200 homes and more than 30 businesses. Normally, meteorologists issue warnings based on radar depictions or spotter reports. By then, a tornado could be minutes from touching down. This time, the NWS issued an additional advisory for parts of four counties in southwest Oklahoma stating “... a high probability that tornado warnings will be issued.” *A new, experimental forecast model made it possible.*

Forecasters that day were working with researchers from NOAA’s National Severe Storms Laboratory who were testing [a prototype Warn-on-Forecast system \(watch this video\)](#), a new research tool that has the potential to dramatically improve predictions of extreme weather at specific locations up to three hours in advance.

It was the first time the Warn on Forecast (WoF) model was used by the NWS in this way.

“We had a picture of the storms and their evolution before they became life-threatening,” said Todd Lindley, science operations officer with the NOAA [NWS Norman Forecast Office](#) in Oklahoma. “We used this model guidance to forecast with greater lead time and greater confidence.”

“Based on the information from the NWS, we knew storms would intensify when they reached our area and were able to activate the outdoor warning sirens about 30 minutes ahead of the tornado,” said Lonnie Risenhoover with Beckham

County Emergency Management.

**As the storm evolved, a faster timeline of information-sharing**

On May 12, the [NOAA Storm Prediction Center](#) had already

identified the possibility of severe weather in the region, and early in the morning on May 16 they updated their forecast calling for significant tornadoes. At 1:50 p.m., NWS issued *a particularly dangerous situation (PDS)* [tornado watch](#) for 33 counties in western Oklahoma and the Texas panhandle.

Soon after, WoF prototype forecasts began to identify a specific area in the eastern Texas panhandle as the likely starting point for potential life-threatening weather.

“That level of detail and lead time in a forecast is new,” said NSSL Director Steve Koch. “To have information conveying a sense of certainty in so small of an area that far in advance is a success.”

The WoF combines the best weather prediction technologies from NSSL in Norman and NOAA’s [Global Systems Division](#) at the Earth Systems Research Lab in Boulder, Colorado.

WoF isn’t operational yet — more work needs to be done — but it represents a significant step on NOAA’s path to providing more precise hazardous weather information to the public sooner.

It’s just one example of how [NOAA weather researchers work hand-in-hand with forecasters](#) to develop and test scientific advances to protect lives, property and commerce.

Media contact: [Keli Pirtle](#), 405-325-6933  
<http://www.noaa.gov/stories/experimental-model-predicted-tornados-path-hours-not-minutes-before-it-formed>

## 5 Strategies to Adjust Your Attitude

I am often accused of *always* having a positive attitude. I firmly believe that your *attitude* determines your *altitude*. One of the keys to long-term success and behavioral change is attitude.



Photo by Neal Fowler on Flickr

Here are 5 strategies I have used to help me maintain a positive attitude.

### 1. Take responsibility.

Blaming circumstances or others for your attitude is a sure way to a bad attitude—at least one that is at the whim of circumstance. As the saying goes, "It's not what happens to you, it's how you respond."

### 2. Go on a media diet.

Unplug from news, advertisements, television, social media, etc. I am not saying bury your head in the sand, just find balance and unplug periodically from the 24/7 news cycle.

### 3. Get enough sleep.

Sleep helps the mind and body recover and recuperate from the demands of every day life.

"Take rest; a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop." –Ovid

### 4. Control your ANTs (Automatic Negative Thoughts).

The problem with Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs)—as described by Dr. Aaron T. Beck—is they become self-fulfilling prophecies. The antidote to ANTs is reverse paranoia. Instead of letting the ANTs dominate my mind, I have adopted a reverse paranoia approach. Reverse paranoia is automatically assuming that people and the world are good, and out to help and support me. Over time you have learned to automatically assume the negative—why not learn to automatically assume the positive? **Adopt a reverse paranoia mindset; assume everyone is good and out to help and support you.**

### 5. Limit complaining.

Complaining does not solve anything. When was the last time you heard someone say, "I can't wait to listen to someone complain?" Besides, the energy used complaining about a problem could be used to focus on solutions to the problem. I have limited myself to complaining only 45 seconds per day. See if you can do the same.

<https://www.gregbellspeaks.com/blog/5-strategies-to-adjust-your-attitude>



## *The Pressure of Time—Not Enough Time in the Day?*

Do you feel like you are always running out of time?



When you are in the role of manager or owner, it becomes easy to create for yourself a never-ending to-do list. In addition to your responsibilities, you have the responsibility for those around you.

And, if your organization suffers from a lack of accountability, communication, or systems, it is probably you who pays the price by working late or coming in early to take up the slack.

The harder you work, the less you think. The Harvard Business Review unpicks the correlation between [time pressure and creativity in this paper](#), if you have time to read it.

When you lack a clear understanding of your priorities, it is very easy to confuse activity with productivity. Once this happens, we start placing unrealistic expectations on ourselves, and that is the fastest route to burn out.

The most common trap a manager can fall into is the fallacy that they have to be Superman or Superwoman, and be everywhere at all times, solving all problems. This type of managerial behavior is an excellent way to *enable* people not *empower* them.

Not feeling in control of your time will place a strain not just on your career, but on your relationships, health, and enjoyment of life. Erik Stafford discusses in [his blog post](#) how he intends to regain control by using the entrepreneurial time system. It's worth considering.

The next time you feel out of control, take a moment and write down your top priorities. Examine how disproportionately your time is actually being spent.

For example, my priorities are God, Family, Health, and Work. Ironically, as a time management speaker, it doesn't take me very long to see that how I spend my time is not congruent to my priorities.

Change management can only begin when we raise our self-awareness and we stop practicing self-deception. Remember, all personal progress starts by being honest with yourself.

"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." — Albert Einstein

Written by Eric Papp, posted Sept 4, 2018  
<https://www.ericpapp.com/blog/>

## Language Matters: The Importance of Listening

We have only to observe the communication of a newborn as it becomes a toddler, child, teenager and adult to witness the evolution and importance of language and the ability to communicate. Newborns quickly learn the results from a whimper, which can quickly escalate to tears; toddlers often take it up a notch to full blown writhing-on-the-floor tantrums; children learn the art of whining a pleading; teenagers, the effect of one-word responses or an eye roll; the communication palette of an adult ranges from a single, silently-arched eyebrow to direct and compassionately-inflected dialogue.

Then there is the often-neglected listening side of language. Just as we can show empathy by mirroring the physical stance or gestures of the speaker, so too can we show attention by using the words of the speaker to let them know we have heard them. Part of listening is allowing the other person to speak and complete their thoughts. How often have you been in a conversation where you absolutely knew where the conversation was headed, even to the point of predicting the exact words to be used? How often did that lead you to interrupt the speaker, thereby depriving them of the complete processing and expression of their thoughts?

A crucial premise of conversation is that it requires effort from both the speaker and the listener. As listener, the more we push away our own thoughts to better allow in the words of the speaker, even remaining calm and silent through a pause, the more surprised both speaker and listener may be at the ideas that surface. Conversation can then transition from knowing what the speaker will say and planning a response to an open, receptive mind that listens with curiosity rather than assumption.

In some ways, the art of listening can be compared to an invitation for bids (IFB) and a request for proposals (RFP). With an IFB, we know the requirements and are looking (or

listening) only for the best price. With an RFP, we may know what we wish to achieve, but we may not know how to get there. We are curious to know the proposer's approach.

Context, i.e., the environment, situation, associated words and concepts, or experience, give meaning to words. This meaning contributes to communication. When the art of listening is integrated into communication, innovation is possible.



We know from homonyms, words that are spelled and pronounced the same, but have different meanings, that context can determine the meaning of a word. "Table" can mean a stable piece of furniture or a motion to set aside an agenda item. There are also homographs, words with the same spelling but a different sound and meaning. Sow is what farmers do with seeds in the spring or it's the mother of piglets. Within your entity, SOW may mean Scope of Work or Statement of Work. "Bid" may mean a solicitation, response, or the action taken to issue a solicitation or offer a response. Without context and a history of how the terms are used, confusion can result. Just as the vocabulary of a child grows as they are exposed to new words and concepts, so, too, does the language of procurement expand as the profession incorporates new methods, skills, and processes. With each new word such as best value, the concept and processes associated with the term are added to the knowledge of the practitioner and the profession. As entities and their stakeholders become more global and varied, the importance of accurate and consistent (cont'd)

## **Language Matters: The Importance of Listening (cont'd)**

use of a professional language increases.

The success of a procurement relies in great part on communication. When we truly listen, we acknowledge the speaker and give them the gift of our attention. Ideally, we create a conducive, relaxed environment for the speaker. When conducting market research or hosting demonstrations, we want to listen carefully to learn what's available and how the supplier sees their product as addressing entity needs. Specifications, too, will more accurately reflect requirements when we offer our customer, the end user, sufficient time, space, and attention to tell us how a product is used or what they must achieve to support their mission. Clarifying questions should be asked when necessary, but in a way that minimizes interruptions and contributes to the speaker's ease. How many times have protests been avoided just by the procurement professional listening and letting the supplier vent? Experiment with turning assumptions into questions. When you find yourself thinking, "I know where she's going with this," turn that thought into "I wonder where she's going with this."

Assumptions and expectations define many of our conversations. We come to a meeting with an agenda of prepared items and an assumption of who will speak and who will not. The words we use trigger expectations. If we refer to "bid", the listener conjures up low price and known requirements while proposals may suggest best value. When we leave assumptions and expectations behind, innovation can emerge. Try it. You may be surprised.

Written for **Government Procurement** by Lisa Premo, NIGP global practices manager who collaborates with public procurement practitioners and academics to conduct research and develop useful guidance on public procurement topics.

**Reprinted from Government Procurement  
August/September 2018 edition.**

## **Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP)**

As you may have heard, eligibility for the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) has expanded. On December 31, 2018, the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) administered by Delta Dental will end, and for the first time, FEDVIP dental and vision coverage will be offered to retired uniformed service members and their families. The first opportunity to enroll in FEDVIP will be during the annual Federal Benefits Open Season, which runs from November 12 through midnight Eastern Time December 10, 2018, with coverage effective January 1, 2019.

Who is eligible? Retired uniformed service members and their families who were eligible for TRDP are eligible for FEDVIP dental coverage for 2019. Additionally, family members of active duty uniformed service members who are enrolled in a TRICARE health plan are also eligible for FEDVIP vision coverage.

Blue Cross Blue Shield participates in FEDVIP for both dental and vision! For more information about Blue Cross Blue Shield dental benefits under FEDVIP, visit [www.fepbluedental.com](http://www.fepbluedental.com). For Blue Cross Blue Shield vision benefit information, go to [www.fepbluevision.com](http://www.fepbluevision.com).

Open Season starts November 12. You must take action! Service members currently enrolled in a TRDP plan will not be automatically enrolled in a FEDVIP plan for 2019. You can enroll in FEDVIP plans by visiting [www.BENEFEDS.com](http://www.BENEFEDS.com).

## Lead Change



Uncertainty, fear, and frustration are some of the typical emotions a person experiences while encountering changes at work. If these feelings are left alone resentment, disengagement, and poor performance start to set in.

Many industries are being disrupted due to technological advances, entrepreneurial aspirations, and higher levels of transparency. These changes are placing more demands on the worker and higher levels of complexity throughout the organization.

Initial enthusiasm is typical in the first phase of a workplace change but having the endurance to see a successful transition through is rare. Being able to [navigate change](#) and measure what matters is a skill that can be developed and give you a competitive advantage.

Here is a three-part process for successfully navigating change at work: **ACT**.

- **Acknowledge every area the change will impact**

Who will be involved? What additional responsibilities will they now have? Many managers and owners don't want to hear negative feedback regarding a change. Who does? However, by not acknowledging the resistance that your

team will encounter is foolish and detrimental. Hearing feedback may require a thick skin, but it should be viewed as a process to allow people to be heard and an opportunity to identify gaps.

- **Concerns and Commitments for effective action**

One of my strategies is the Effective Action Circle. This is a process of uncovering concerns and identifying commitments. Being effective means your ability to produce the desired result. Many knowledge workers are not as effective as they could be simply because they don't take the time to uncover concerns and are instead fixated on outcomes. These concerns dominate their thinking and leave them with fear, anxiety, and stress. Yet, when we habitually write down our concerns and commitments, we grow in effectiveness.

- **Test Mindset**

Let go of certainty and stop trying to control an outcome. We experience high levels of stress when our expectations are not met. Many managers and owners have misguided expectations when it comes to the adoption of a new change. When you have a test mindset you are constantly learning and ask yourself powerful questions. What is working? What is not working? Knowing what we now know, what would we do differently? Having a test mindset will make words like process and patience a routine part of office conversations.

by Eric Papp  
Time Management Speaker

<https://www.ericpapp.com/2018/10/23/lead-change/>



## 5 WAYS TO CHOOSE IMPORTANT OVER URGENT

People tend to choose urgent tasks they can complete quickly and put off important tasks that take longer to complete. ([The Mere Urgency Effect](#))

Important tasks take longer and are more demanding than unimportant urgencies.

### The Mere Urgency Effect:

You tend to delay important tasks by saying, “Just let me finish this and I’ll do that later.” But

we all know that ‘later’ seldom comes.

The Mere Urgency Effect indicates ...

1. We choose unimportant tasks with lower payoffs over important tasks with better payoffs.
2. We let artificial deadlines drive us to choose unimportant tasks.

You didn’t change the oil in your car because you had more urgent things to do. One day the car starts making scary noises. You neglected the important – scheduled maintenance. Now you have an urgency.

The same can be said for relationship building. You just don’t have time! But skillful leaders build and strengthen relationships before they need them.

In an age when running around with your hair on fire is desired and admired, important work gets pushed aside.

### 5 ways to choose important over urgent:

1. Put important work on your calendar.
2. Expect important work to take longer

than expected.\*

3. Use values to guide decisions.

4. Establish short-term goals for long-term projects. Suppose you have an important task due at the end of

the week. Create effective urgency by setting a goal to be completed by 3:00 p.m. today. (Set short-term daily goals for important long-term work.)

5. Turn off social media. Check email at scheduled intervals. Turn off email alerts. (Yes, not everyone can do this.)

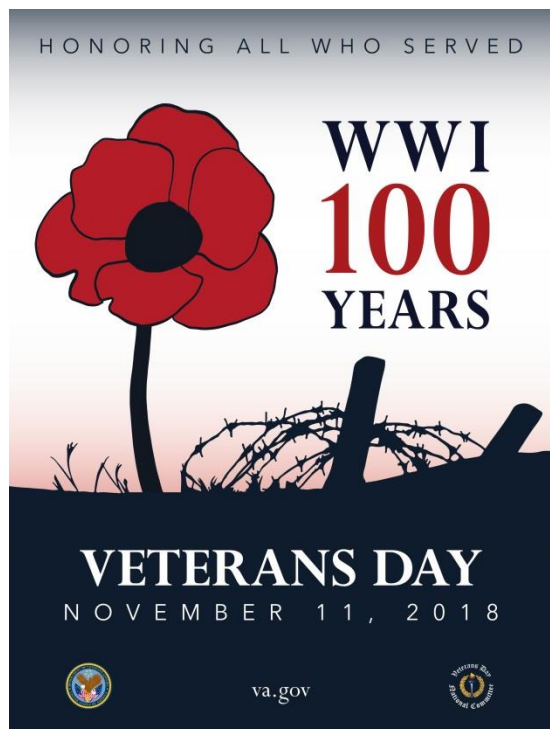
Bonus: Identify important work with your team or boss. Ask, “What’s important this week?” It helps to know what’s important if you plan to do what’s important.

<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2018/09/24/5-ways-to-choose-important-over-urgent/>



## Observing Veterans Day

To all our Veterans--fellow employees, family members, friends, and strangers who risked all--thank you.



World War I – known at the time as “The Great War” - officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, in the Palace of Versailles outside the town of Versailles, France. However, fighting ceased seven months earlier when an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, November 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of “the war to end all wars.”

In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day with the following words: "To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the

victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations..."

<https://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/vetdayhistory.asp>

### Suicide Prevention

In June, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released findings from its most recent analysis of Veteran suicide data for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

This report yields several important insights:

- Suicide rates increased for both Veterans and non-Veterans, underscoring the fact that suicide is a national public health concern that affects people everywhere.
- The average number of Veterans who died by suicide each day remained unchanged at 20.
- The suicide rate increased faster among Veterans who had *not* recently used Veterans Health Administration health care than among those who had.

Sometimes, life's challenges can feel overwhelming, like there's no way things can get better. When things feel unbearable, or if you're having thoughts of ending your life, **support is available**. VA offers a number of programs and resources for Veterans and their loved ones, friends, and health care providers.

If you are a Veteran in crisis — or you're concerned about one — free, confidential support is available 24/7. Call the Veterans Crisis Line at **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, send a text message to **838255**, or [chat online](#).

[https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/)



U.S. Small Business  
Administration

Houston District Office

## Are you Interested in Starting your own Business?

### Houston District Office

8701 South Gessner, Ste. 1200  
Houston, TX 77074  
713-773-6500  
[www.sba.gov/tx/houston](http://www.sba.gov/tx/houston)

The Houston District Office provides SBA programs and services in our 32 counties. Working with SBA's resource partners SCORE, SBDC, and WBC, we can help you start, grow, and achieve business success.

Visit SBA online: [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov) for 24/7 access to small business news, information and entrepreneurs training.

SBA offers help in the following areas:

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For local SBA information visit:  
Houston District Office Resource Guide:  
[www.sbaguides.com](http://www.sbaguides.com)



**Are you nearing retirement and exploring new opportunities?** Or, are you wondering how you will generate income after you retire? A growing number of individuals over the age of 50+, or 'Encore Entrepreneurs', are turning to small business ownership. Whether you are interested in starting a small business right away or intending to wait until after retirement, now is the time to explore possibilities.

Join the U.S. Small Business Administration and SCORE to receive introductory information focused on identifying the key factors that influence a start-ups business success. This seminar will provide an overview of the resources and tools available to help small businesses start, grow, and succeed!

**DATE:** Wednesday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**TIME:** 2:30pm-4:30pm

**LOCATION:** NASA- Gilruth Center  
2101 NASA Parkway, Building 207 (Lone Star room)  
Houston, TX 77058

**REGISTER (free):** <https://nasasba.eventbrite.com> (Password: NASA)

*SBA offers a variety of programs and services. Understanding how SBA works is the first step towards receiving assistance. Whether you are just getting started or you are an existing business ready to expand, you will learn about our loan programs and how our resource partners, SBDC, SCORE, and WBC can help.*

*For more information, contact Valerie Maher at (713) 773-6541, [Valerie.Maher@sba.gov](mailto:Valerie.Maher@sba.gov)*